

# Introduction

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The City of Atlanta's Comprehensive Solid Waste Management Plan (Comprehensive SWMP or the Plan) serves as the City's action plan for managing the City's solid waste. The Plan is a requirement of the State of Georgia's Department of Community Affairs (DCA) for local governments in Georgia, and was initiated by the Georgia Comprehensive Solid Waste Management Act (Official Code of Georgia Annotated [O.C.G.A.] §12-8-20) of 1990. The legislation was enacted to ensure that proper solid waste management planning by the State, local governments, and Regional Development Centers in the State will prevent environmental degradation, manage resources, and effectively reduce and manage solid waste for the State and its residents.

## 1.1 History and Progress to Date

The City's previous Solid Waste Management Plan was written in 1995 and expires this year. During this period, the City implemented several recommendations from the 1995 plan, including curbside recycling and yard waste collection. The City also closed its four City-owned landfills in 1991, and began utilizing Waste Management Incorporated's Live Oak Landfill in DeKalb County for the majority of its residential waste. Live Oak Landfill closed in 2004, and the City is now utilizing privately owned transfer stations and landfills under short-term renewable contracts for the disposal of its waste.

The City has recently made strides to become more efficient in providing solid waste management services. The City began with a reorganization of the Department of Public Works (DPW), which previously contained the Department of Public Works, Office of Solid Waste Services (SWS), and the Department of Water and Wastewater Services. Water and wastewater services are now in the new Department of Watershed Management, and the DPW provides solid waste services. SWS is now divided into two divisions—Administration and Operations—providing better management and organization of the services. SWS is funded through the SWS Revenue Fund, which consists primarily of service fees for solid waste collections, frontage fees, and the recycling fee. SWS has also reorganized its cost centers to better track funds and costs with the services it provides. In yard trimmings collection, SWS has also made strides in improving the collection frequency to provide service every other week.

Throughout the development and review of this Plan, SWS solicited and received numerous comments and input from:

- The public, at 22 public and community meetings (prior to preparing the Draft Comprehensive SWMP), and through other community forums such as Neighborhood Planning Unit (NPU) meetings, public hearings, and neighborhood and civic organizations.
- Environmental and business groups

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- The Solid Waste Management Planning Advisory Group (SWMPAG)
  - Mayor Shirley Franklin and the current Administration
  - City Council Members
  - Previous solid waste studies and initiatives, which included: The Solid Waste Management Action Plan for the City of Atlanta, January 1991, and the Solid Waste Handling Facility Task Force, created on May 19, 2003.

The public involvement process is a dynamic process that balances the City's desire to achieve Best-In-Class services, cost-effectiveness, and operational efficiency with the needs and concerns of the public, businesses, and environmental groups. The City's goal is to determine what is best for the City of Atlanta, with input from stakeholders, as decisions are made.

The Short Term Work Plan (2005-2010) and this Comprehensive SWMP (2005-2014) are updates of the 1995 plan. Both documents set forth solid waste management programs for the City to implement over the next 10 years (the planning period).

## 1.2 Office of Solid Waste Services (SWS)

The primary developer and author of this Plan is SWS, which is responsible for the collection and disposal of solid waste within the City of Atlanta. SWS also provides a wide range of other solid waste management services that include yard waste collection, recycling, City building collection, bulky waste collection, street sweeping, street basket collection, removal of illegal signage, vacant lot and right-of-way (ROW) cleaning, dead animal removal, illegal dumping cleanup, and assistance with citywide emergency operations. SWS also oversees post-closure/monitoring operations of the City's four landfills.

As noted above, SWS consists of two divisions organized by function in order to increase their efficiency and delivery of services: Administration and Operations. The Administration Division includes Education and Enforcement, Waste Reduction, and Management Analysis. These units are responsible for code enforcement and compliance, maintenance of contracts devoted to waste reduction, recycling, and yard waste processing, route analysis, mapping, off-site plan review, budget preparation, and development of educational publications and activities.

The Operations Division is responsible for household garbage bulk rubbish and yard trimmings collection, as well as curbside recycling for single-family homes within the City of Atlanta. Formerly, these responsibilities were organized by geographic area. The DPW' mission is:

*"To enhance Atlanta's quality of life by working collaboratively with citizens, public and private entities, and other City departments to provide public works services that maintain and improve infrastructure and physical environment, utilizing a highly skilled and motivated work force."*

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SWS's mission is:

*"To provide solid waste services to Atlanta's residents, thereby contributing to an enhanced quality of life by creating clean and safe neighborhoods and public spaces."*

## 1.3 Solid Waste Management Plan Organization

This Comprehensive SWMP follows guidelines published by the Georgia DCA for completing a SWMP, which were established in DCA's "Minimum Planning Standards and Procedures for Solid Waste Management (Rules of Georgia Department of Community Affairs, Chapter 110-4-3.04)." This Plan provides an effective, comprehensive solid waste management strategy that addresses the waste disposal stream, waste reduction, collection, disposal, solid waste facility siting, and public involvement.

This Comprehensive SWMP is organized as follows:

- **Section 1. Introduction** provides background information on the City of Atlanta.
- **Section 2. Waste Disposal Stream Analysis** provides an inventory and analysis of the current and projected solid waste stream in the City.
- **Section 3. Waste Reduction Element** presents an inventory and assessment of existing programs in place to reduce waste and a summary of new waste reduction programs that will be considered for implementation by the City.
- **Section 4. Collection Element** presents an overview of the residential and commercial trash collection in the City and proposed changes that will be considered by the City.
- **Section 5. Disposal Element** provides a summary of how waste is currently disposed and future disposal options that are under consideration by the City.
- **Section 6. Land Limitation Element** sets forth the process, laws, and regulations that will govern the siting of new solid waste management facilities within the City limits of Atlanta.
- **Section 7. Education and Public Involvement Element** presents current educational programs regarding solid waste management and future programs under consideration.
- **Section 8. Implementation** presents the Implementation Strategy that the City will use in continuing existing programs and beginning new ones for the planning period. This section also includes cost estimates for these programs.

## 1.4 Solid Waste Management Strategy

Mayor Shirley Franklin and the current Administration's main vision for the City of Atlanta is to become a Best-In-Class city. The Mayor's vision includes making the City of Atlanta:

- A safer, cleaner city
- A more responsive and effective government
- Better for seniors, children and working families
- An open and honest City Hall

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- A strong and efficient infrastructure

In keeping with these goals, the City has developed a long-term strategy to effectively manage the City's solid waste that will reduce waste, educate residents, ensure compliance, and provide customer satisfaction, while ensuring cost-effective management and operational efficiency.

The key objectives of this long-term strategy are to:

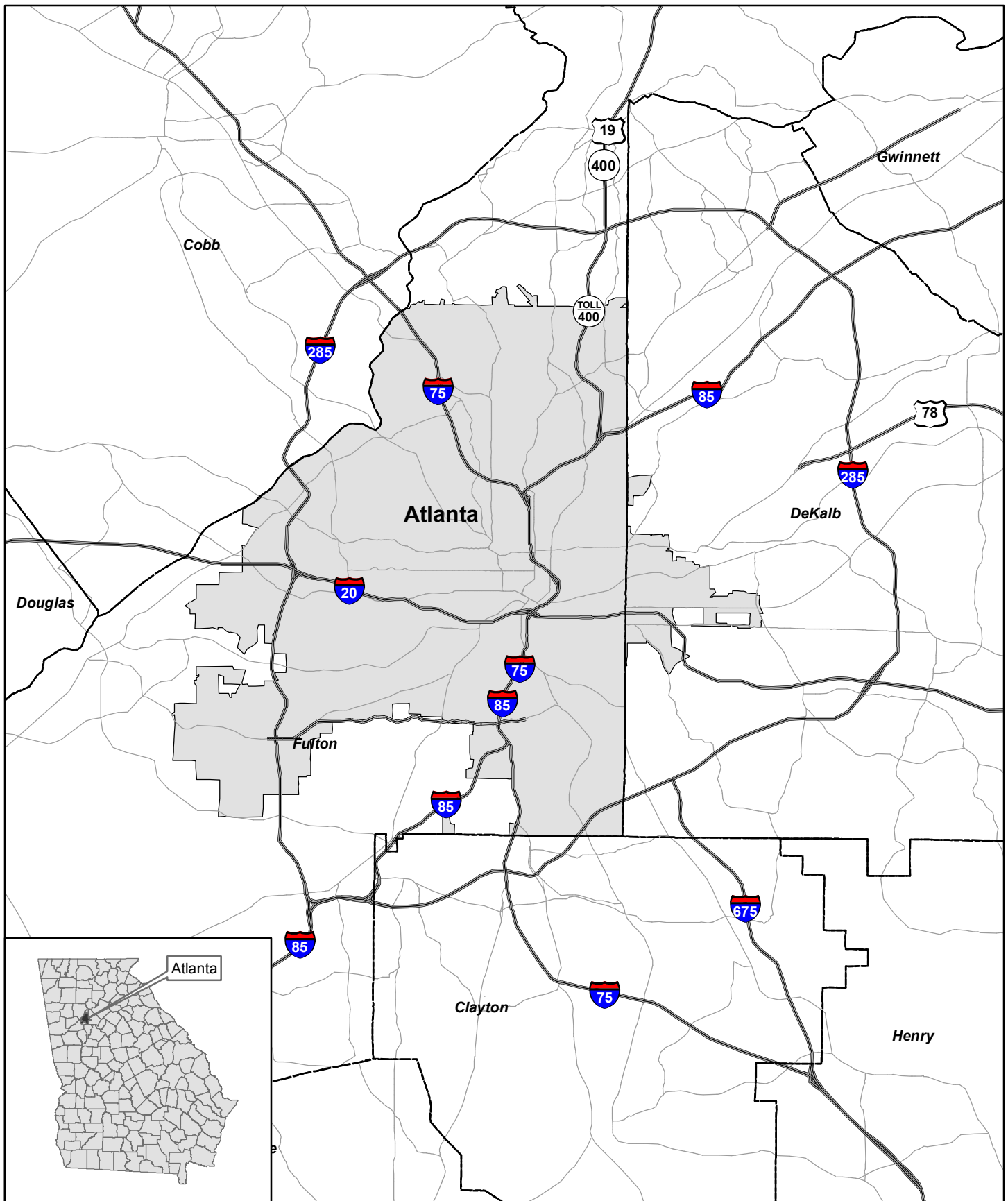
- Inform the public about solid waste services.
- Position the City to provide solid waste services that are Best-In-Class, including providing efficient, cost-effective, and first-rate services and examining alternative disposal options that will be the best technology for the City.
- Provide opportunities for the public to have meaningful input to the solid waste management process and obtain endorsement of the decisions the City plans to implement.
- Comply with State regulations.

The City understands that future programs and some of the proposed solid waste management programs in this Plan are for the long-term management of solid waste and not just for the 10-year planning period. The City also understands that solid waste management is an evolving process; therefore, the City will perform annual reviews of this Plan, submit annual reports to the State, and submit the Short-Term Work Program progress report to the State every 5 years. The City also reserves the right to make any necessary changes or amendments to the Plan.

It is understood that waste management is everyone's responsibility, from the City to its residents. Because all citizens want a clean place in which to live, everyone in the City of Atlanta must bear an equal share in managing its solid waste. It is a cooperative process, in which the City must provide the best services its residents desire through cost-effective and operationally efficient means, and the residents must do their part in following curbside set-out rules and not illegally dumping solid waste. This cooperation is enhanced when opportunities for waste reduction, education, and public involvement are available during the entire process. A holistic approach to managing the City's solid waste will ensure that Atlanta is a Best-In-Class city for many years to come.

## 1.5 Defining the Planning Area

The City of Atlanta is primarily located in Fulton County in north Georgia, as shown in Figure 1-1. A small portion of Atlanta, known as East Atlanta, is located within DeKalb County. The service area for the City of Atlanta is approximately 131.6 square miles located within the city limits. The City, located in the center of a 10-county metro Atlanta region, is a member of the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) Regional Development Center (RDC). The City is bounded on the west by the Chattahoochee River and on the east by the City of Decatur and DeKalb County. The City limits extend from the area south of Doraville to the cities of East Point and Hapeville to the south.



0 50 100 150 200 Miles

Atlanta City Limits



**CH2MHILL** / **WILLIAMS-RUSSELL AND JOHNSON, INC.**  
engineers • architects • planners

**Figure 1-1**  
Atlanta Vicinity Map  
City of Atlanta  
*Comprehensive Solid Waste Management Plan*

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Land use within the City ranges from the highly urbanized Central Business District and other high-rise commercial areas to suburban residential areas. Atlanta is a hub for rail transportation, the intersection of major interstate highways, and has an international airport.

The 2000 Census population for the City was 416,474 and estimates prepared by the ARC indicate that the 2004 population for the City of Atlanta is approximately 434,900 (City of Atlanta Bureau of Planning). ARC population projections indicate that the City of Atlanta has experienced an average annual growth of 1.1 percent, with 4,607 new residents each year, between 2000 and 2004.

## 1.6 General Descriptions

### 1.6.1 Development in the Major Areas of the City

Since the SWMP was last updated in 1995, the City has experienced some significant changes. Many of these changes were stimulated by the increase in growth and development that occurred during and after Atlanta hosted the 1996 Olympics. A series of redevelopment plans were completed for neighborhoods that included Olympic venues. Since the Olympics, there have been efforts to revitalize Olympic ring neighborhoods through infill housing programs and redevelopment of public housing projects. The Atlanta Housing Authority has also redeveloped a series of housing projects into mixed income housing developments. In turn, private developers have taken the initiative to convert many old industrial buildings into loft apartments and condominiums.

The Central Business District has historically been a commercial center; however, since the Olympics, there has been a resurgence of downtown living as new residential housing has been developed in this area. Downtown serves as the corporate headquarters for Georgia Pacific, Georgia Power, SunTrust Bank, Turner Broadcasting, Cable News Network, and is home to Georgia State University. The Central Business District also includes the Georgia State Capitol, Atlanta City Hall, Atlanta Public Schools Central Office, Underground Atlanta, a variety of State Government agencies, Centennial Olympic Park, and major sports and convention center facilities.

The Midtown area includes several of the older in-town neighborhoods as well as high-density commercial development. During the 1980s, several large office towers were constructed in this area. Since 1995, this area has also experienced growth in residential, commercial, and office development. Midtown is home to the Coca-Cola Headquarters, the High Museum of Art, and the Georgia Institute of Technology. Growth in this area is anticipated to continue with the redevelopment of the former Atlantic Steel site into Atlantic Station – a mixed-use commercial, housing, and office development. When completed, this redevelopment is expected to add up to 7 million square feet of office space, 1.5 million square feet of retail space, and 4,000 residential units.

The Buckhead area includes a thriving commercial area associated with Lenox Square and the Phipps Plaza shopping area. In recent years, this area has experienced some growth in high-rise residential towers.

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The southeast areas of Atlanta are primarily residential and include many of Atlanta's older neighborhoods. Population in these areas in the last 5 years has gradually declined. This area is home to several manufacturing industries which sharply declined in the early 1990s but have recently stabilized to some extent.

Southwest Atlanta is primarily residential and includes many of the City's older residential neighborhoods as well as the Atlanta University Center. Southwest Atlanta has experienced tremendous population growth and development over the last 5 years.

The portion of Atlanta in DeKalb County saw the conversion of the East Lake Meadows public housing project into a mixed-use development centered around the historic East Lake Country Club.

The northwest Atlanta area is a primarily residential area with some industrial areas located along the railroad corridor. During the 1990s, some portions of this area were converted to more service-oriented uses.

### **1.6.2 Topography/Unique Natural Features**

The topography of Atlanta is predominantly characterized by rolling hills and broad, smooth uplands. Atlanta is located within the Atlanta Plateau and is part of the greater Georgia Piedmont Province of the Southern Piedmont Region of the United States. The areas with the largest change in elevation (areas with slopes of 15 percent or greater) are located in the northwest and southwest quadrants of the City. Elevations in Atlanta range from 960 to 1,050 feet above sea level.

The Chattahoochee River is one of the most prominent natural features of Atlanta. The Chattahoochee River forms the northwestern boundary of the City, flowing through a valley which ranges from 150 to 400 feet in depth and from 2 to 5 miles in width from rim to rim.

### **1.6.3 Population**

The population in the metro Atlanta area has been rapidly increasing over the last decade. In comparison, the City of Atlanta has experienced only small gains in population. Table 1-1 shows historical and projected population growth for the City of Atlanta and the metro Atlanta region.

Four of the 10 fastest growing counties in the nation are located in the metro Atlanta area. As a result, the Atlanta area has added 650,000 people and 850,000 jobs since 1990 (City of Atlanta Comprehensive Development Plan, 2004). The metro Atlanta region has a diverse economic base which includes growing white collar industries that have resulted in an increased per capita income in the metro region. Population and job growth are anticipated to continue and the overall population of the region is expected to reach more than 2 million residents over the next 25 years. The majority of the growth that has occurred in the metro Atlanta region has occurred in the northern suburbs and the north side of Atlanta. As jobs and population have shifted to the northern portion of metro Atlanta and adjacent suburbs, a large area of little or no population growth, economic decline, and concentrations of poverty continues within the City of Atlanta.

TABLE 1-1  
Population by County and the City of Atlanta

	1980 Census	1990 Census	2000 Census	2003 ARC Estimate	2004 ARC Estimate	Average Annual Change 80-90	Average Annual Change 90-00	Average Annual Change 2000- 2004		Change 2003-2004	
								Persons	%	Persons	%
Atlanta Region	1,896,182	2,557,800	3,429,379	3,669,300	3,716,100	66,162	87,158	71,680	2.0	46,800	1.3
City of Atlanta	424,922	415,200	416,474	432,900	434,900	-972	127	4,607	1.1	2,000	0.5
In DeKalb	37,183	35,300	29,775	31,900	31,800	-188	-553	506	1.7	-100	0.3
In Fulton	387,739	379,900	386,699	401,000	403,100	-784	680	4,100	1.0	2,100	0.5

Source: Atlanta Regional Commission, 2004, City of Atlanta Comprehensive Development Plan 2004-2011.

## 1.6.4 Seasonal Population Variation

The City of Atlanta has some seasonal fluctuation in population. The City is known as a conference and convention destination for many national organizations and, as such, experiences temporary increases in population throughout the year. Additionally, the City's sports venues are host to bowl games and other large events which draw large groups of people throughout the year. The City is also home to several colleges and universities, including the Atlanta University Center, Georgia State University, and Georgia Tech, all of which have fluctuations in enrollment significant enough to impact population variance.

## 1.6.5 Number of Households

The City of Atlanta experienced an increase of 11,308 housing units between 2000 and 2003. This 3-year increase was 2.5 times the net increase in housing units during the decade of the 1990s in the City. The total housing units in the City of Atlanta as of April 2003 were estimated at 198,306 according to the ARC. Approximately 48.8 percent (96,846 units) were single-family homes compared to 50.7 percent (100,518 units) that were multi-family units. (Population and Housing 2003, ARC, December 2003). This increase in housing development has not significantly impacted the volume of solid waste that the City manages. The majority of this housing development has been infill housing and redevelopment of existing urban areas which are in the City's current service area. This incremental growth is expected to continue at a manageable pace unless real estate market conditions drastically change. Overall, if this rate of housing growth continues over the next ten years, it is not anticipated to significantly impact the level of service provided by SWS.

The City of Atlanta ranks seventh of the 100 largest cities in terms of multi-family housing stock. The City has a large supply of multi-family dwellings; however, rents have increased significantly faster than the national average, with 4 in 10 renters paying at least 30 percent of their income for rent. Similarly, the City ranks low in home-ownership among the nation's largest cities. However, on the west side of the City, there is a large number of first-time homebuyers as well as senior citizens who own their own homes.

SWS estimates that it services approximately 87,000 single-family homes and 33,600 multi-family residences in the City of Atlanta. Likewise, it is estimated that approximately 63,762 multi-family homes are serviced by private waste collection entities.



### 1.6.6 Commercial/Manufacturing/Industrial Businesses

Table 1-2 indicates the types of commercial, manufacturing, and industrial businesses that operate in the City of Atlanta. The table also indicates the approximate number of people employed in each of these sectors in 2000. Because of the large number of persons commuting into the City for work and recreation, it is expected that the commercial waste volume in Atlanta is higher on a per capita basis than in most comparable cities. Specific data on commercial solid waste amounts are provided in Section 2 of this Plan.

TABLE 1-2  
Employment by Major Industry Sector, City of Atlanta, 2000

Sector	Number Employed
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	674
Construction	9,551
Manufacturing	13,998
Wholesale Trade	6,103
Retail Trade	17,148
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	10,884
Information	10,476
Finance, insurance, real estate, and rental and leasing	15,328
Professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services	31,406
Educational, health and social services	30,754
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services	19,017
Other services (except public administration)	8,683
Public administration	8,914

Source: North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) and U.S. Census Bureau, 2000.

## 1.7 Contact Information

The following DPW personnel serve as contacts for this Plan:

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